

CLAIMS AGAINST ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Synopsis

Innovation in curriculum design and pedagogy practice: WAAPA's Bachelor of Arts (Acting) at ECU

Edith Cowan University, Western Australia offers one of the leading actor training conservatoires in Australia: the Bachelor of Arts (Acting) (BAA) in the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). The performing arts' industry is so highly competitive that most reputable theatrical agents will not seek to represent an actor unless one of the top four conservatoire training institutions in the country has trained them; this includes WAAPA, a well-recognised, prestigious performing arts academy. Since 2014, a talented team of industry professionals have led an outstanding, holistic program. They bring a lifetime of acting, performance, and training experience to their teaching. The BAA is highly competitive and selective: each year it attracts over 800 applicants vying for 18 places. Students are coached through a fully scaffolded, immersive experience that supports them to integrate three foundational strands of actor training: Voice, Movement, and Acting. This tailored approach contributes to outstanding student experience outcomes well above the School, University, and national rankings and exceptional graduate outcomes, exemplified with BAA graduates performing in international and local movies, theatres, shows, and TV series, as well as creating their own work.

Overview

The BAA was established in 2014 with three underpinning principles: (i) provide the finest training to promote excellence in students; (ii) create relationships and networks to seed future partnerships and employment opportunities upon graduation; and, (iii) consolidate WAAPA's position as an internationally recognised conservatoire training organisation. The first graduates finished the Program in 2015 with a combined degree of the Advanced Diploma in Acting and the BAA. The BAA sits amongst seven other performing arts disciplines in WAAPA and was born out of industry and graduate advice to meet the current needs of the performing arts' platform in Australia, which is rapidly and dramatically changing. The vision of the BAA is to develop innovative and courageous artists poised to be the creative leaders of tomorrow, committed to extending the limits of their creative and analytical processes to continually renew the art. The staff of the BAA recognise that the performing arts contributes to a humanistic society and they aspire to develop acting students' artistry, imagination and humanity (e.g. Moore, 2013; Taylor, 2016; Beddie, 2016; van den Eynde, Fisher, Sonn, 2014).

The three-year full-time program is an intensive conservatoire-training course developing resilient and innovative students. An example of how the BAA ensures student success is through the Program's 'whole-of-course' approach to scaffolding students' learning based on authentic industry aligned processes. During their three year degree, students will participate in at least 12 productions, 6 short films and a multitude of other performances. A hallmark of the program is the outstanding quality of the local, national and international guest directors, artists and organisations who have been invited to work with students in simulated industry conditions. There are five key teaching staff members, all current practitioners, who develop and deliver the BAA; each bringing with them immense experience and wisdom into the Program. The BAA is fully devoted to training the *all-round professional actor* through immersive and continuous practice in higher education.

The Students The BAA attracts over 800 applicants from across Australia and internationally. The Acting staff travel all around Australia to view live auditions and video auditions are accepted from international applicants. Building confidence and community starts with warmly welcoming the incoming students (see Appendix A). Many students come from interstate or overseas, often leaving home for the first time and become deeply involved in their training, and life as a student. It is imperative that a healthy environment is created for the students in the BAA to ensure they are comfortable, grounded and safe. Early diagnostics and continuous monitoring of learning, supports students throughout their degree (expanded upon in Criterion 1). Students form genuine relationships with the visiting artists who often directly employ them

upon graduation or help to influence employment. The highly prestigious employment outcomes of BAA graduates nationally and internationally are an achievement of the Program given its competitiveness with other eastern states acting programs. The BAA is held in such high regard by Australian Theatre Agents, that two of the top agents have recently asked two young actors, who they already represent, to receive their formal training in the Program: *Without doubt acting graduates from WAAPA are amongst the very best of acting graduates each year. This is not only because of the excellence of their craft, which is undoubted. But it is also that, of all the drama schools, year after year, WAAPA graduates are the most ready to enter the acting workforce. Not only amongst our colleague theatrical agents but casting directors, directors, producers and Network executives, the graduates of WAAPA are always the subject of great anticipation* (Simon Whipp, Theatrical Agent, Shannahan Management Pty Ltd, Australia 2018).

The BAA students are fortunate to train in an immersive, cross-disciplinary culture alongside over 1,000 students at WAAPA studying Dance, Music Theatre, Production and Design, Contemporary Theatre (Bachelor of Performing Arts), Aboriginal Performance, Contemporary, Jazz and Classical Music and Opera.

The Teaching Staff The teaching staff are the glue that holds this kind of intensive training together through: passion for the work and for the development of individual students; willingness to invest in students; provision of world class training; constant constructive feedback almost on a daily basis; support for student mental, physical and emotional growth; and, ability to connect students to industry through current industry practice. Course Coordinator Glenda Linscott is an actress with 35 years' experience and 27 years actor-training experience; she was appointed in 2015 and is Head of Acting. *Glenda's direction is always quite rich and you really feel like you're mining diamonds with her by your side* (Formal student evaluation, 2018). Associate Professor Andrew Lewis is an experienced actor, theatre director, film and television director and academic. He continues his invaluable contribution to industry through the collaboration with the Western Australian Screen Academy (WASA) and the interface with the professional industry. *Having Andrew Lewis as a teacher for our screen acting class in third year (ACT3004) was an invaluable experience. The studio was always a respectful learning area, and he would give us the time we needed on the floor to really consolidate our learning, as well as honest feedback, insightful direction, and encouraging words. With Andrew as a teacher, I know that not only have I improved this year, but I have been given the skills to continue to facilitate my own development after I have left WAAPA* (Unsolicited Student email, 2018). Samantha Chester has 25 years' experience as a movement director and was Associate Director of The Actor's Centre in Sydney; she was appointed as Head of Movement in June 2015. *Sam Chester is 150% invested in each one of the students, she appreciates that we are all individuals on our unique journey and supports us every step of the way. She is generous with her advice, support and energy, she expects nothing but the best of us and know the capacity we each have* (Formal student evaluation, 2018). Donald Woodburn is the former Head of Voice at Africa Film Drama Art AFDA, the School for the Creative Economy, Cape Town, South Africa and Lecturer in Voice at WAAPA; he was promoted to Head of Voice in 2018. *Donald's voice classes are my favourite! I learn huge amounts. I like how the practice is very individual. He doesn't lump all the students into the same problems, but focuses on us individually* (Formal student evaluation, 2017). Luzita Fereday, professional actress with 25 years' experience and a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) London, joined the School as Lecturer in Accent and Dialect in 2017. *Luzita is a fantastically knowledgeable voice teacher, her approach is rich, her energy is warming and comforting, yet her exercises are vigorous and testing. I also find Luzita's approach to accent work is accurate and easy to implement* (Formal student evaluation, 2016).

The caring ethos of the staff is essential for creating coherence and clarity of purpose in the program as is acknowledged across the sector. *In my view, the features that distinguish the WAAPA Acting course are the high quality of the permanent teaching staff across theatre and screen acting, and in voice and movement classes. The unique way in which these skills are integrated into the curriculum and into production contexts offer excellent learning opportunities for the students* (Dr Melanie Beddie PhD (Performance), La Trobe University, 2018).

The BAA has evolved as an extensive conservatoire training program guided by a philosophy of Discovery, Application and Embodiment and at all times in a safe, diverse, and inclusive environment. The core innovation of the program in the last three years has been to develop curriculum that unites rigorous skills-based training with local, national and international guest directors and organisations to simulate real-life industry programs and productions. The combination of all these factors demanded that we graduate students with more than just acting skills: our graduates are exceptional people who are self-determined, autonomous strategists who are resilient and elite performers at the top of their game. As recognised nationally, these qualities mean graduates attract A-list agents, gain employment in the current climate and become artists capable of contributing to a vibrant artistic community. *WAAPA has set the bar that each of the leading schools aspire to. WAAPA is regarded in the top three drama schools in the country, with Acting Agents and Casting Directors taking keen interest in the graduates each year. The list of successful WAAPA graduates is indeed lengthy and impressive and appears to be ever growing! (Dr Andrea Moor, Course Coordinator, Acting, School of Creative Practice, QUT, 2018).*

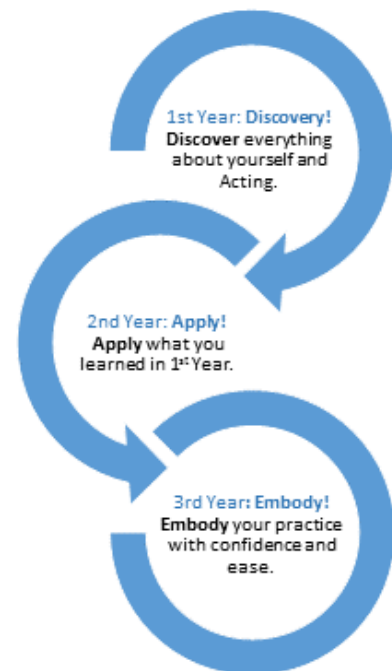
Statement addressing the Assessment Criteria

Criterion 1: Distinctiveness, coherence and clarity of purpose

Clear objectives & systematic approaches The BAA is fully devoted to training the all-round professional actor through immersive and continuous practice in higher education. The three-year full-time program is an intensive conservatoire-training course. Graduates are thoroughly prepared for a career in a wide variety of media, including theatre, television, film and radio both in Australia and internationally. The aim is for the actor to be technically adept and have an informed, rigorous outlook that will open the mind and ignite the imagination. The Program ensures student success through a whole-of-course approach with clear objectives and systematic scaffolding of quality learning experiences and assessments based on authentic industry-aligned processes from discovery in first year to application to embodiment in the final year.

Students develop their skill, craft, artistry and humanity, through the nurturing of the whole instrument – voice, body, mind, and imagination. A studio-based learning environment is provided where students are encouraged to develop holistically as an actor. The philosophy and practice is centred on the development of the *self-determined artist* possessing a passion for theatre and a desire to contribute meaningfully to the evolution of the art form, and to the greater community.

The cross fertilisation and alignment of learning is healthy and inspiring. Over the length of the BAA, students have several opportunities to work with students in Arts Management, Production and Design as well as Music disciplines to perform in a multitude of productions for a variety of audiences. In 1st Year students team up with Bachelor of Performing Arts students for Text and Historical Studies, and with Aboriginal Performance students for Voice and Movement classes. Second and third year students collaborate with Production and Design students in all productions. *WAAPA has a superb working environment and each department seems to not only support the other, but I am sure the students benefit from having other art disciplines around them which complements and supports their own work. (Vivian Munn, Director, RADA's Elders Company, UK; Visiting Artist, 2017).* This collaborative environment extends to the nurturing, supportive, encouraging culture WAAPA fosters for students. From day one, WAAPA provides a 'magnetic campus' with students attending each other's' shows, socialising together, and cheering each other on. A supportive culture is also developed through student attendance at their peers' performances. There are student matinees on the Tuesday and Wednesdays of performance weeks and it



is compulsory that students attend the matinees. Students are required to attend at least two performances of each production throughout the year. All 2nd and 3rd Year Voice, Acting and Movement Showings are attended by the whole acting program staff and students. Selected 1st year showings are attended by all, including end of year productions. The supportive culture this creates is apparent to everyone who visits the campus: *There is a very healthy, positive culture within the student body. It is in fact the healthiest I have experienced in any institution which must be a direct reflection of the skill and care of the teachers and their training* (Craig Illott, Australian Theatre Director, 2017).

I adored working at WAAPA! I loved the faculty and the students. It reminded me of the Julliard School here in New York City (Barney O'Hanlon, SITI Company New York, 2017).

Implementation and evaluation The first year is an adventure of discovery. Upon entry, each student participates in a rigorous series of low stakes post-entry diagnostic exercises that assess specific acting, voice and movement tasks. Strengths are identified and specific habits and idiosyncrasies are noted, thus giving each student a clear starting point for their training. To facilitate the creation of a bespoke approach for each individual student, all information is collated and recorded for future reference. In their first year of training, the foundational practice for primary skills in Voice, Movement and Acting are laid down (see Appendix B).



Classes run from 8:30am – 6:00pm daily with skills classes in the morning and creative projects and rehearsals in the afternoon (see Appendix C). Throughout the course, Acting units are divided into two categories. The first category focuses on teaching the **skills of acting** and the second category is the application of those skills in a **creative project**. In first year, all creative projects are performed in-house to staff only. This is to protect them from social or public scrutiny before they are ready for public scrutiny.

Students' skills and personal progress are monitored regularly throughout their training. They are evaluated at weekly staff meetings. The 1st year students have weekly private tutorials with Acting, Voice and Movement staff, and the 2nd and 3rd year students by appointment. At the end of each semester, students are provided with a dossier giving extensive written feedback from every full-time and sessional staff member. They also have a one-on-one interview with a full panel of full-time staff. In consultation with the student their progress is evaluated, achievements and challenges acknowledged and goals for the next stage of development identified. This pattern of student support continues throughout the three years and has contributed to increased student satisfaction since 2015.



The 2nd year of training is the engine room where students continue to develop skills to a higher level of proficiency and are required to **apply** them throughout the year. Students are encouraged to apply a deep understanding of the actors' craft, to grow through the mastery and performance of challenging theatrical forms, and accomplish personal growth through a series of tailor-made challenges (see Appendix D). *I noticed that the second and third year students were infinitely more ready to receive and sense the work which manifested that there had been a considerable groundwork of training which had opened their perceptions, imaginations and artistic choices* (Linda Wise, Director Pantheatre, Roy Hart Centre, France; Master Trainer, 2017).

As the study progresses through second year, the creative units are the rehearsal and performance of productions directed by invited guest artists. Students work alongside Production and Design students to realise the production. Staff provide hands-on support to the students throughout rehearsals and performances, spending many hours beyond their teaching schedule to attend dress rehearsals, previews and performances. These productions are small in production scale, played to general public audiences, and not reviewed (see Appendix E). This gives students the freedom to be bold, take risks and challenge themselves in a protected environment. This well-structured and supported approach has been designed to help students succeed through authentic learning opportunities for continued growth. *The students are engaged, skilled, open and approach the work in a sophisticated way. The staff are supportive and the work they do with the students is clearly extremely high, judging from the work I saw across the 1st, 2nd and 3rd*

Year. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with the students (Dr Bagryana Popov, Director Ajax in Afghanistan, 2018).



When students enter their 3rd year, they are encouraged to regard themselves as confident and expressive artists and to **embody** their process with grace and ease. Staff-student relationships shift to a more mentor-mentee dynamic. Throughout this final year, the students are encouraged to think strategically and plan for success in the performing arts industry upon graduation. The third year offers Advanced Skills classes in Semester One. All classes are tailored to encourage students to achieve excellence in accordance with professional industry standards. As part of their Professional Preparation Unit, students are introduced to industry bodies including Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), MediaSuper, and the Australia Council. They meet with casting directors from television networks and theatre companies; learn about funding, scholarship opportunities; further training opportunities in Australia and overseas; and, create a 5-year business plan.

In Semester Two, the emphasis shifts into full-time rehearsal of the two remaining productions, the completion of the Screen Acting Unit and preparations for the National Showcase. Every year, a five-play season of popular and classic plays are performed to paying audiences (ranging in size from 300- 1000+ people over the season) and reviewed by the local press and media (see Appendix F). Third year students are cast according to their strengths and are expected to perform to a professional standard. They play in larger theatres and productions are fully supported by Production and Design students. In third year, students collaborate with the WASA Masters of Directing students and make six short films, which are sponsored by Channel 9 and broadcast on the 9 Network later in the year. *I was able to audition for projects even before I had representation. 'Breath' directed by Simon Baker was one of these. Other credits in the last two years include 'Love Child', 'Harrow', 'The Secret Daughter' and 'Shiloh'. I am about to start filming my second feature film [as] the lead character. I owe this all to the training I received at WAAPA (Megan Smart, 2016 Graduate).*

Students' second semester is peppered by opportunities to audition for stage and screen projects going into production the following year. The result is that students have often been booked in a production well before they graduate. For example, Matt Lutton, the Artistic Director for upcoming *Cloudstreet*, a co-production between Malthouse Theatre Company in Victoria and the Black Swan State Theatre Company in Perth, visited Perth to run auditions with third year BAA students in August 2018. As a result, he booked one student and for the production set to show in 2019.

Finally, the students' journey culminates in a presentation to the Performing Arts Industry at the end of their final year in the Actor's Showcase. This is the final performance of their WAAPA BAA journey, and arguably the most important one. Showcase is performed to an invited audience of Industry stakeholders in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and, for the first time this year, Los Angeles, California.

Each performer is profiled in a three minute feature film scene which is shot with a professional crew on location in and around Perth, and also in a three minute scene from a stage play. The performance alternates between film scene and stage scene giving each graduate the opportunity to demonstrate their skill across the two platforms of stage and screen. The night ends in a meet and greet so graduates can network with agents as a final authentic learning experience.

The purpose of Showcase is to secure for each graduate representation with a reputable Theatrical Agent, and to bring them to the attention of casting directors, managers and directors from theatre companies, as well as Network Heads, producers, agents and other personnel from film and television companies interested in employing them. *Brian Walsh, Foxtel's Executive Director of Television attended the Sydney Showcase. He was impressed by my performance on film and months later offered me two leading roles; one in Foxtel's period drama, 'A Place to Call Home' as well as a leading role in Foxtel's upcoming miniseries, 'Fighting Season'. This has been my break and generated momentum for me in the industry (George Pullar, 2016 Graduate).*

The WAAPA Showcase is a hotly anticipated national industry event, and agents typically will not extend offers to graduates from other schools until they have seen the WAAPA graduates. These performances are well attended with 100 - 500 people attending (depending on the size of the city). Agents even fly in from Los Angeles, and from around the country to attend. Showcase is also attended by friends and families, graduates from previous years, and other well-wishers from the industry including actors, directors, and those visiting artists who have worked with students during their training. It is a significant rite of passage for our graduates as we all celebrate them and their achievements, and they say farewell to WAAPA and hello to the world! *I am so thankful to the graduation showcase WAAPA offers at the end of third year. It is an amazing opportunity that puts you in front of industry professionals from around the world. It set me off on an incredible start in the industry, and for that I am eternally grateful. Since graduating from WAAPA in 2016, I have had the pleasure of starring in shows both in Australia and the UK including 'Our Girl', 'The State', 'Barracuda', 'Doctor Doctor' and 'Thor: Rangnarok' (Shalom Brune-Franklin, 2016 Graduate and Winner of 2016 Chris Edmond Scholarship).*

Criterion 2: Influence on student learning and the student experience

The student experience, student success, and student wellbeing are critical components of the program, contributing to unprecedented retention success. The BAA program has had 100% retention since being offered (2014-2018). This retention rate is unprecedented and unique at ECU, and indeed the sector. Additionally, the overall quality of educational experience is ranked at 87.4%, far above the national average reported by the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) at 79.5% (2018). The BAA is a flagship for ECU, with consistent student success and satisfaction from its inception in 2014 and continuing in 2018.

Targeted, identified needs for an enhanced student experience Following on from the low stake diagnostic exercises conducted early in first year, student learning is tracked systematically throughout the rest of their training (as outlined in Criterion 1). Throughout second and third year, staff and students conduct a debrief the day after the final performance of every production. These vital conversations are powerful opportunities to engage with, reflect upon and analyse the critical learning experiences these productions afford.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and engage in a rigorous daily self-reflection practice. They submit several skills' journals throughout the year, a Rehearsal Log Book and a self-reflection analysis at the end of each production. They must demonstrate how they are understanding and applying the system to advance their practice. Students are vigorously encouraged to differentiate between what is their personal taste and judgement. At the end of each production, there is a debrief with all staff and students. These intentional practices contribute to outstanding student progression and enhancement of student learning and experience in the acting program.

Finally, individual assessment interviews are conducted at the end of each semester. Staff and students discuss each student's report; achievements and growth are identified, current challenges explored and goals for future growth are set. Each student has the benefit of the whole team to discuss their progress, so that a holistic approach is maintained for each student throughout their training.

Enhanced student experience through health and wellbeing Students' mental and emotional wellbeing and safety is a priority. In 2015, *The Artist's Way Program* was introduced to teach self-reflection practices: how to develop a relationship with your creative self, how to deal with personal blocks, and the inner critic. *Psychology for Actors* classes were introduced in 2016 for all students to learn strategies to deal with anxiety and perfectionism, to improve mental health and well-being, and to build resilience and confidence. Anecdotal feedback from students has been extremely positive – with comments like “Shona's classes are so helpful – now I know what I'm experiencing has a name!”

In 2017, as part of the International Master Trainers Program, Sarah Victoria and Rik Stowmen from the Perdekamp Emotion Method (PEM), Germany, were invited to the Acting school. The PEM is at the cutting edge of new training methods for actors and adopted in conservatoires all around the world. It is a tool to connect young actors to emotions beyond their personal experience to provide them with a method to

access a wide range of emotional expression safely. *The pedagogy of stimulating emotional responses just by giving attention to a particular body part is gold for an actor. I learnt that this method allows me to experience any given emotion and as quickly as entering that I can return to a neutral state - with no overwhelming emotional residue. Quite often to get into these states, other methods focus on creating or accessing personal history to draw out these emotions, which can leave you with a hangover of distress and exhaustion. So this practise is so effectively refreshing! Sarah and Rik delivered their workshops with utmost professionalism and care for us learning (Student feedback, 2017).*

Innovation in student engagement A significant point of difference between the WAAPA Acting Program and the other major conservatoires is the amount of screen acting the course offers making the BAA highly distinctive. Screen acting techniques and tutelage are threaded throughout the training and build across the course to prepare graduates for careers in film and television....*[the BAA is] exceptional in its screen training... Students study on camera- techniques throughout the three years, which culminate with performing in a live action short film. The screen curriculum is expertly delivered. As a result, industry personnel throughout Australia are quick to sign students in their third year, a practice recently undertaken by Hollywood agents and casting directors who have likewise begun recruiting graduating students and alumni. In fact WAAPA now holds a showcase in Los Angeles, thereby further distinguishing it as an international powerhouse (Dr Peter Zazzali, Kansas University, 2018).*

This unique program with acting students and student filmmakers (directors and cinematographers) in combined studio classes provides a distinctive holistic approach where the students collaborate with each other and develop film narratives, thus allowing the actors to become truly camera fit and gain extensive exposure to film and television techniques and practices. These classes culminate in two major productions. *One of the most useful skills that I've retained is the shorthand I now have when it comes to taking direction. Especially working on 'Home and Away', everything moves exceptionally fast, and it's important to assimilate information quickly to adjust your performance. Through the Acting for Camera classes and guest masterclasses, WAAPA gave me the tools do this efficiently (Lukas Radovic, 2016 Graduate).*

The enhanced BAA student experience has resulted in exceptionally high ratings from formal student evaluations with a level of overall satisfaction (OS) from 2014-2018. The BAA OS sits far above the School and the University with an aggregate agreement of 89% and mean of 72, compared to the School OS agreement of 82% and mean of 57, and the University OS agreement of 78% and mean of 49. Figure 1 below shows the consistently high levels of overall satisfaction with the BAA from 2014 through 2017.

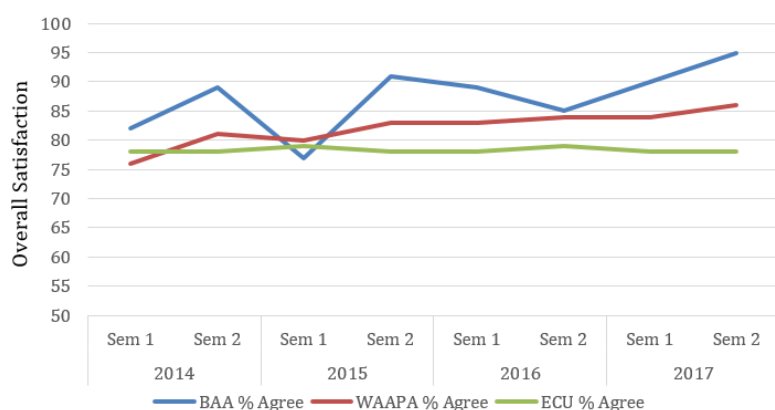


Figure 1: Formal student evaluations: Overall satisfaction results 2014-2017

Criterion 3: Breadth of impact

Employability and impact in industry (local and international) The BAA impacts at the local, national, and international levels. Perhaps the most important impact is seen in the employability of the students that graduate (see Appendix G). Students successfully train as artists for both national and international work. Their employability is directly in response to the growing acting program and its relevance to industry. Since

2016, nine local guest Theatre Directors and Creative Artists, 11 national Theatre Directors, 9 international Theatre Directors, and 9 international Master Trainers have been invited into the School. These artists then carry the word of the good training and talent they have witnessed to Australia and beyond thereby boosting WAAPA's reputation and global standing (see Appendix G). *I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at WAAPA directing 'A Tale of Two Cities' and have been made most welcome by students and staff alike. The third year actors have been a real pleasure to work with. They are thoughtful, skillful, collaborative, hard-working, adventurous and, most importantly, full of fun!* (Professor Hugh Hodgart, Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film, Royal Conservatoire Scotland, 2016).

In the last three years, graduates have secured prestigious employment in Australian television and movie dramas including *Barracuda*, *The Heights*, *Harrow*, *Very Small Business*, and *Tomorrow When the War Began* for the ABC; *Doctor Doctor* and *Love Child* for Channel 9, *A Place to Call Home* and *Fighting Season* for Foxtel and *Breath*. Graduates have worked for major Australian theatre companies in *Measure for Measure*, Sport for Jove (NSW) *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Malthouse Theatre (VIC)/Black Swan State Theatre Centre (WA); *Assassins*, *The Lighthouse Girl*, *Switzerland*, *Let the Right One In*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, Black Swan State Theatre Company. Graduates have had international success with Hollywood blockbusters *Thor: Ragnarok* and *Power Rangers*, the upcoming *Hotel Mumbai*; also television series *Stranger Things* on Netflix; *Our Girl*, BBC and *The State for UK Channel 4*.

As a student, Giuseppe Rotondella (2016 Graduate) worked with Perth-based director Lawrie Cullen-Tait on 3rd year production of *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller. The following year she cast him in the Black Swan State Theatre Company's production of *Switzerland* in 2017.

NOT only has Giuseppe Rotondella's acting talent landed him his second role at Black Swan State Theatre Company within a year of graduating from WAAPA, but it has provided him the opportunity to play a character based on another 'talented' individual – author Patricia Highsmith's Mr Tom Ripley – in *Switzerland*.

Figure 2: Eastern Reporter Community News, August 1, 2017.

In 2017, Visiting Director, Lizzie Schebasta, Director Sport for Jove, (NSW) directed a 2nd year production of *A Dream Play*. While here, she conducted Shakespeare Masterclasses with 3rd year actors. In 2017, she offered three WAAPA graduates roles, including the lead, in her production of *Measure for Measure*.

Partnerships, collaborations: local and international. The learning experience in the BAA is uniquely enhanced through partnership with the Minderoo Foundation, a philanthropic initiative established in 2001 that supports projects in education, research, Indigenous affairs, disaster response and the arts both in Australia and internationally. Over the last three years, the partnership has allowed the BAA to develop and achieve strategic ambitions, principally with the Minderoo Foundation providing funding for the highest calibre of visiting artists. Engaging with visiting artists not only benefits acting students, it also has wider ramifications across WAAPA and the Western Australian arts community. Collaborations with international visiting directors Hugh Hodgart from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow and Peggy Shannon, Chair of the School of Performance, Ryerson University, Toronto have resulted in the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with WAAPA/EUC. The MOUs provide many positive opportunities for the institutions involved, including staff and student exchanges and the sharing of ideas and projects. Below are two examples of how these exchanges have already impacted on and strengthened the BAA.

Example 1: Teresa Moore, 2nd year Acting student, also a graduate of the WAAPA Aboriginal Theatre Certificate IV course, impressed Peggy Shannon so much that she invited her to travel back to Toronto with her to perform in her production of *Home*, a devised piece of theatre about the current refugee diaspora in the world. This was a life changing opportunity for Teresa

Example 2: In early 2017, Head of Performance Andrew Lewis travelled to Scotland with 3rd year students Frazer Lee and Natasha Vickery to participate in a short film co-production between WAAPA and the RCS. They filmed in Scotland for two weeks and then returned to Perth with students from the RCS to complete filming in Western Australia. Andrew also travelled to Toronto in December 2017 to direct a production for Ryerson students, and conduct masterclasses.

The Minderoo Foundation also funded commissioning award winning Australian playwright Reg Cribb (*Last Cab to Darwin*) in 2015 to write a play about bullying, a contemporary issue with deep resonance for young people. The resulting play *Bullies* was performed by current 2nd year students in August 2018. In 2016, the Acting Program partnered with Playwriting Australia to co-commission four local playwrights Hellie Turner, Chris Isaacs, Finn O'Branigain and Gita Bezdard to write four short plays performed by 2nd year students in May 2017 under the umbrella title of *Petits Fours*. One of the plays *Alice Paws, or Bite the Hand* by Chris Isaacs was also presented at the Shanghai Asia Pacific Bureau Festival in April 2017. *The health of the performing arts, particularly in this day of collaborative teams is dependent on strong artistic alliances. That these collaborations are cross generational are a vital means of transferring skills and knowledge along the line enable new and emerging artists to reap the benefit of the long-learned expertise of their artistic elders* (Hellie Turner, Playwright, Perth Australia, 2017).

Whilst visiting artists are in Perth working with acting students, external workshops and Q&A's are offered to local artists and arts organisations in association with arts companies, regional youth theatres, Year 11 and 12 drama students as well as emerging and established Aboriginal performers and theatre makers. The flow on effect of these workshops is that it enriches and grows the cultural capacity of the WA arts landscape through dialogue and essential upskilling of its artists.

The introduction of an International Master Trainer Program in 2016, also funded by the Minderoo Foundation, has been a standout initiative. Such is the reputation of the program that the team have been able to attract eleven first class international artists at the top of their field in Movement, Voice, Film and Television and Acting. The impact on our students being able to train with these practitioners cannot be understated. The artists that the BAA team have been able to bring to WAAPA for periods of one to three weeks are the theatrical equivalents of theatre arts royalty. They augment the curriculum with Master classes or projects and provide an incredible injection of new or specialist knowledge in their fields.

Criterion 4: Addressing equity and diversity

Promoting and supporting equity, inclusiveness and participation. In the last three years, a suite of activities to address equity and diversity has been rolled out to positively impact the *whole* student experience, including: auditioning all potential students; actively creating a diverse environment; engaging students with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and content; increasing gender equality; and ensuring a caring environment for students and staff. We are also responsive to broader global issues such as the #MeToo campaign. Since February 2018 and in response to the #MeToo impact on the Performing Arts industry in particular, the BAA has been at the forefront of rolling out a series of discussions with all WAAPA staff and students which has resulted in the development of a series of policies around appropriate behaviour in the classroom, rehearsal rooms, theatres and film and television. In 2019, the BAA is being adapted to include an Intimacy Director to run workshops to give actors, directors, producers, crew and creatives from the stage and screen industries the opportunity to learn best practice approaches to intimacy, simulated sex scenes and nudity. An Intimacy Director (ID) is a relatively new role that has emerged in response to *the #MeToo phenomenon*. *Having a conversation about sexual harassment in class has thoroughly informed and eased my mind on moving forward with my rights as an actor in the industry and throughout. I feel safe knowing that there are policy guidelines already written out to advise me when handling scenes involving sexual intimacy, and I'm currently using these guidelines in class! It makes me feel so proud to be a part of an institution at the forefront of this movement* (Unsolicited Student, email, 2018).

Gender equality and diversity. The Program has been vigorously pursuing gender equality in the arts for the last three years and has made significant shifts in the direction of gender equality by actively engaging women directors, seeking plays written by women and finding better roles for women. The scarcity of material providing equal (and good) roles for women is one of the reasons the BAA team actively pursue commissioning new work. The latest project, a collaboration with Fremantle Press, sees a brilliant female central character in a stage adaptation of the Western Australian novel, *The Hope Fault* by Tracy Farr, commissioned by award winning local actor, writer and director Andrew Hale.

The recruitment process seeks talented students but students who reflect the multicultural and inclusive nature of a modern Australian society. Students hail from across the globe including Vietnam, Korea, Ethiopia, Laos, South America, South Africa, Sweden, Singapore and second generation Irish, Greek, Italian and Lebanese people and two Aboriginal students from the Northern Territory. The cohort is small, selective, strong and inclusive creating greater synergies for learning through the richness of diversity. The BAA is the only school in the country to have a close association with an Aboriginal Performance course. The imperative need for students to grow alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers is an important feature of the BAA. *Monday morning warm-ups with Luzita Fereday and the Aboriginal theatre performance student is a great way to start the day. I think its super beneficial as well, to be able to work and learn alongside and get to know the Aboriginal students* (Formal student evaluation, 2018).

Summary

People often wonder how, what is essentially a creative act, can be taught and assessed; it is possible. Acting is a craft, and like all crafts, there is a step-by-step process to learn. The BAA teaches a foundational process or 'system' laid out by Konstantin Stanislavski, "*the father of contemporary acting practice*" (Merlin, 2007) to cultivate the "art of experiencing" which contrasts the "art of representation". Strong creative relationships created between actors, directors and playwrights feed directly into the next generation of theatre creatives and the future arts community in Australia. It supports the creation of new Australian work providing invaluable experience for the actor in training, who gets to participate in the development of something written for them as opposed to interpreting a written text. Staff that teach into the BAA are dedicated, experienced and active actors bringing together a lifetime of experience and skill into the classroom. The increasing growth of its national and international recognition is a testament to the effort of the staff that have nurtured its development and ongoing stability (see Appendix H). The students have an exceptional experience through the rigour of the training and the integrated approach to learning with a strongly aligned curriculum. Students that leave the BAA have been integrated into the Arts, have reflected on practice, have been mentored and have become mentors to new students and have been immersed into a deep acting experience through the multiple performances. The Bachelor of Arts (Acting) is rigorous, authentic and bespoke: student learning is scaffolded in a safe, inclusive, formative environment that supports students to become self-determined, resilient, professional actors prepared to transition into and be successful in national and international acting careers.... *students are committed and hardworking... Highly skilled across a range of disciplines, I have always found them to be an excellent addition to a rehearsal room. It is clear the institution is successful at pushing the students in a practical course that challenges, provokes and provides opportunities that are life changing and career oriented* (Stuart Halusz, Associate Director, Black Swan Theatre, 2017).

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- Taylor, L (2016). *Actor Training and Emotions – Finding a Balance* (Doctoral dissertation) Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.
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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION: Bachelor of Arts (Acting) Program

GLENDALINSCOTT: Course Coordinator and Head of Acting. Appointed Course Coordinator and Head of Acting in January 2015. Glenda spent the first six months familiarising herself with the curriculum, staff, timetable, scheduling and room booking systems at WAAPA. She then completed a number of training modules to learn how to be a more effective Course Co-ordinator. With the guidance and support of Dr Catherine Moore Senior Academic Developer, and Leitha Delves, Senior Learning Designer from the ECU Centre for Learning & Teaching she undertook a course mapping exercise and major overhaul of the Course Learning Outcomes and overall curriculum delivery.

Glenda revised all the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year Acting Skills Units which are ACT1001, ACT1005, ACT2004, ACT2008, ACT3005, ACT3008 so that they ran parallel with the overall course ethos of Discovery, Apply and Embody. She introduced into the Acting program a foundational approach to acting – the Stanislavski ‘system’ from which all other methodologies could be benchmarked. The overhaul more clearly articulated the progression of the learning over three years, so that students could clearly understand and track of the training over time. In addition, this created a foundational matrix of training experience into which the Voice and Movement curriculums could align themselves.

In consultation with the team, Glenda then upgraded all the Acting Production Units, which are the creative projects, and productions where students can test and apply their skills. The Learning Outcomes and Assessment criteria for ACT1002, ACT1006, ACT2001, ACT2005, ACT3001 and ACT3005 were re-written in order to accurately reflect the incremental degrees of difficulty students are expected to accomplish over the three years. It also provides students with a clear map to guide them with the integration of the three strands of the Actors’ craft - Acting, Voice and Movement into a holistic practice. This framework leads the students from a basic understanding of the Actor’s craft in 1st Year to being able to perform complex roles in difficult plays across a range of performing styles and performing platforms at a level of excellence required of professional actors by the end of 3rd Year. – 50%

SAMANTHA CHESTER: Head of Movement. Appointed Head of Movement in July 2015, Samantha was a key figure in helping streamline the Acting Program overall. She re-wrote the entire Movement Program including units ACT1003, ACT1007, ACT2002, ACT2006, ACT3002 to bring them more into alignment with her own expertise, and current industry practices. Students work for physical transformation and a fundamental understanding the self-determined artist, and work toward full physical capacity of the body. Samantha’s contribution extends far beyond that of excellent Viewpoints, Movement and Iyengar Yoga teacher; she works as Choreographer on most productions with visiting directors. She has also created two original productions with 2nd Year students, *On Things That Matter* and *Atlas*, and collaborated with international director Andy Paris to facilitate the realisation of another group devised piece *Momentum*. – 20%

DONALD WOODBURN: Head of Voice. After 7 years as Lecturer in Voice at WAAPA, Donald assumed role of Head of Voice in 2018. He brings to the program a very effective process he developed early in his career called Vocal Targeting where natural and heightened speech is analysed and the patterns and behaviours discovered. Donald has streamlined his curriculum to facilitate the delivery of this process. In many instances, Donald has initiated Voice and Acting co-teaching classes to enhance the student’s ability to integrate their Voice and Acting training. – 10%

LUZITA FEREDAY: Lecturer in Voice, Dialect Coach, Voice and Speech. Appointed in 2018 Luzita brings a fresh approach to the teaching of Accents and Dialects with a new process called Phonetic Pillows by American Voice Teacher Louis Collaianni. Luzita reviewed and upgraded her program to utilise time more efficiently, to provide continuity of training and enhance the student experience, and to impart accent skills that will improve student employability, eg General American. Luzita also co-teaches with Acting staff wherever appropriate, eg Shakespeare Scene Studies. – 10%

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANDREW LEWIS: Head of Performance The original author of the program, Andrew continues his invaluable contribution especially in relation to the collaboration with the Western Australian Screen Academy and the interface with the professional industry. – 10%

Supporting Material - Appendix A

1. VIDEO

Please go to the following link to watch the 3 minute video of WAAPA's Bachelor of Arts (Acting) at ECU:

<https://youtu.be/pR9TUEkKxo>



2. SUPPORTING MATERIAL

10 additional pages showcasing industry and community engagement.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN THE AUDITIONEES

The purpose of the first round Auditions is two- fold

- 1) To identify the applicants who we think are good enough to test in the Call Back Audition.
- 2) To **meet with warmth and openness the aspiring young people** of Australia who have chosen to audition for WAAPA. To **build rapport with our community** and **build WAAPA's reputation** as the best training Academy in the country. Not the least of which is because of the **warm, generous, kind and respectful** way we conduct our auditions.

The first round is to sort applicants into three piles. YES, NO and MAYBE.

What I look for.....

1. TEXT

- Have they learned their lines accurately?
- Do they understand what they are saying?
- Have they made a reasonable attempt to portray the context of the piece? (given circumstances/who are they talking to?)
- Did they find a point of change?

2. VOICE

- Is it a nice voice?
- Does it have an interesting quality?
- Are there any problems? (stutter, lisp, noticeable mannerisms)
- Even in an untrained way - are they able to use their voice to tell their story?
- Are they trainable?

3. BODY

- Is it a good body? A transformative body?
- Do they carry themselves well?
- Are there any noticeable physical issues? (curvature of spine/over or under weight, height, body markings)
- Even untrained, are they able to inhabit the world they have created physically?
- Are they trainable?

4. THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM

This is the most important one for me.

If an actor can connect to the meaning of the word or a thought – and be changed mentally, physically and emotionally (i.e. the psycho-physical connection)?

If this is then converted into strong and believable action - then I know I can train them.

I am looking for a vibrant:

- Imagination.
- Focus.
- Conceptual Intelligence.
- Emotional Intelligence.
- Emotional access.
- Great listening.
- Do they have good inner life?

Nervous Auditionees;

- If an Auditionee is overwhelmed with nerves, I try to **be as kind as possible** – don't let them suffer too long. **Reassure them**. But I know in my heart that they are not ready for drama school yet.
- **Trust your instincts**.
- Other panel members will **see things I don't see**.
- If you really see something in someone that others don't see then they must go into the **MAYBE pile**.
- Fyi - Andrew and I look at the MAYBE Pile at the end of each day and the really good ones pretty much pick themselves when you compare them with the others that you have seen that day.

UNIT ACT1007

Introduction

"The actor is an athlete of the heart" Antonin Artaud

Using a variety of contemporary somatic practices and techniques this unit will further expand the students' movement knowledge. **This unit enhances how the actor uses movement free of restriction and impeding habits for imaginative exploration, creation of original work and transformation work. The classes call for courage, initiative, rigour and self-awareness. All classes are designed to be explorative, challenging, inventive and varied. All practices undertaken will further expand the students movement knowledge, physical confidence for the actor and seek to support full physical possibility of the actor.** This unit further lays the foundation for a deeper understanding of how the actor uses movement for imaginative exploration, building characterization and transformation as it aligns to their acting and voice work.

Learning Outcomes

In this unit, you will be learning to:

1. Apply the tension line between performer and audience;
2. Apply time, weight, space and stillness as it relates to movement;
3. Embody abstract and transformation imagery and physicality into performance;
4. Have the ability to translate research material and movement tasks into a unique theatrical performance;
5. Demonstrate the use of gesture, mimicry in the physicalisation of character.

Range of Movement that will be explored:

1. Contemporary Dance Technique
2. Iyengar Yoga I
3. Creation of a 3-4 Minute Self Devised Movement Solo
4. Creation of a highly detailed 'Rockstar' for performance
5. Fundamentals of Stage Combat I (Arm to Arm)
6. Study animal and anthropomorphic work for demonstration



Demonstrates holistic, rigorous training regime

Unit Schedule: ACT1007

Week	W/C date	Tuesdays		Wednesday	Thursday		Friday
Class		Yoga	Rock-Star	Contemporary Dance	Solo Project	Stage Combat	Animal Work
TIME		9.00 – 11.00am	11.00 – 1.00pm	9.00– 11.00am	2.00 – 4.00pm	4.15 – 5.45pm	9.00 – 11.00am
ROOM		RS1	RS1	RS1	First Ave Space		RS1
1	23 July	Standing	Intro	Intro	ZOO TRIP 1 – 5pm		Intro the senses
2	30 July	Forward Bends	Research	Contemporary Dance Class	Introduction to Solo Work	Stage Combat	Backbone Breath Rhythm Space the way it uses the space
3	6 Aug	Backbends	Research	Contemporary Dance Class	Devising Tools	Stage Combat	Weight Center of Gravity Rhythm of Life
4	13 Aug	Restorative	First Draft first 1 minute!	Contemporary Dance Class	Devising Tools	Stage Combat	Sound and Eating
20 – 24 August Development Week with Andrew Hale							
5	27 Aug	Standing	Research	Contemporary Dance Class	Devising Tools	Stage Combat	What have we learnt so far
6	3 Sept	Seated Forward Bends	Research	Contemporary Dance Class	First Draft	Stage Combat	Staying as your Animal
7	10 Sept	Backbends	Research	Contemporary Dance Class	First Draft	Stage Combat	Anthropomorphic Study – excursion
8	17 Sept	Restorative	Second Draft	Contemporary Dance Class	Final Rehearsal	Stage Combat	SOLO PERFORMANCE Performance 6 – 9pm STUDIO A
25 – 29 September Mid Semester Break							
9	1 Oct	Self-Practice Demo Class	Final Rock Star DRAFT - Rehearsal	In Class Presentation	Rehearsal Rock Star	Stage Combat Showing in Class	9 – 11am final run through in the space Studio C 7– 8pm Performance Rock Stars Performance Studio C
8 Oct		Rehearsals					
15 Oct		Rehearsals					
22 Oct		Rehearsals					
29 Oct		Performance					
5 Nov		Interview Week + Screen Week					

Second year student Jessica Veitch, preparing the role of Speed in Two Gentlemen of Verona – a very difficult task because the role (a Puck-like character) in this production was shared by two actors, Jessica and Alexander Dilley.

SPEED DAY #1 23/07/2018

LIGHT **BOUND**

JUMPS?! **Calculated**

MIND Always **SMILE**

LIGHT **BODY**

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY are clearly touchstones for the actor, in himself, and in his giving over of himself to the suggested persona of a character, or 'the other', which is also himself. Nothing about this can be fixed, the currency of it is indeterminate. Indeterminacy is also central to the inquiry and development of twentieth and early twenty-first century art.

Indeterminacy is an obvious paradigm for the 'chemical' activity innate to the actor and his processes, and indeterminacy is the motor of compulsion in Barker. In this sense, the modernity of Barker's texts is that the **surface is the depth**. Great texts are concerned with the poetic exploration of **psyche**, and the explication of such in the body of the language. Like Shakespeare, Barker brings this explication to the open surface, where the characters are both the **experience of the language** and the objects of that experience, consciously, at one and the same time. This is the drama of the psyche defining itself in language, in a recurring sequence of continuous self-discovery and self-immolation, under extremes of circumstance and pressure - like a verbal and dramatic exposition of continual

HATS x2

QUICK

careful Alex **Jess Jess** Alex **INDIRECT**

USE THE HAT **SMILE** **unexpected** **RHYTHM**

MALVOLIO

LOYAL DEVOTED HUMOROUS (underwear)

PUCK **PLAYFUL** **clever** **mischievous** **sideways!!** **dangerous** **monkey** **willing**

ARIEL **PHYSICAL** **LIGHT** **DUTIFUL**

AGAIN, CHEEKY to protus + Valentine in different way

DROMIO **swore of an ass**

Advisory **Competitive** **Punished** **oward** **DUO**

Servants **Shakespeare**

"Whimsical and fun and light and never too serious. He wants to keep the sense of magic throughout, even during the mechanical scenes, and with the lovers. He wanted it to be seamless, and what he wanted with Puck's character was for him to be the through-line."

Third year student Lily Stewart, preparation notes for the role of Miss Prism in The Importance of Being Earnest.

Repetition exercise

You read the dialogue repeating the sentence from the other character before you say your own line as a question

↳ and you repeat this in the tone that your character receives this information. **But as a question**

↳ also you don't have to repeat the whole line. It might just be a couple of words. so then your dialogue becomes a response to that question.

eg. Gwendolen: You are here on a short visit I suppose?

Cecily: (I am here on a short visit?)

Oh, no! I have no mother, nor, in fact any relations.

If you come into the scene but your dialogue doesn't match the character before, still keep it a question but make it about what drew you into the scene.

eg. **Prism** Cecily: But even a momentary separation from ~~some~~ anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

Prism: Why are they so close to each other?

The dog-cart is at the door, sir.

43) Merriman leaves
I want to keep this moment alive forever

44) I prompt Ernest for more
I want to educate Ernest

45) Merriman returns

46) Merriman leaves
I want to encourage the naughtiness

48) Ernest proposes
I want to explain the thing to my new puppy

45) I already love him
I want to take him through the emotion maze.

46) I have loads of letters
I want to guilt trip him































45) Our engagement was broken
I want to let him in on the secret

46) we kiss
I want to keep him perfect

47) I want to marry Ernest
I want to swoon over Ernest

48) He a deal better

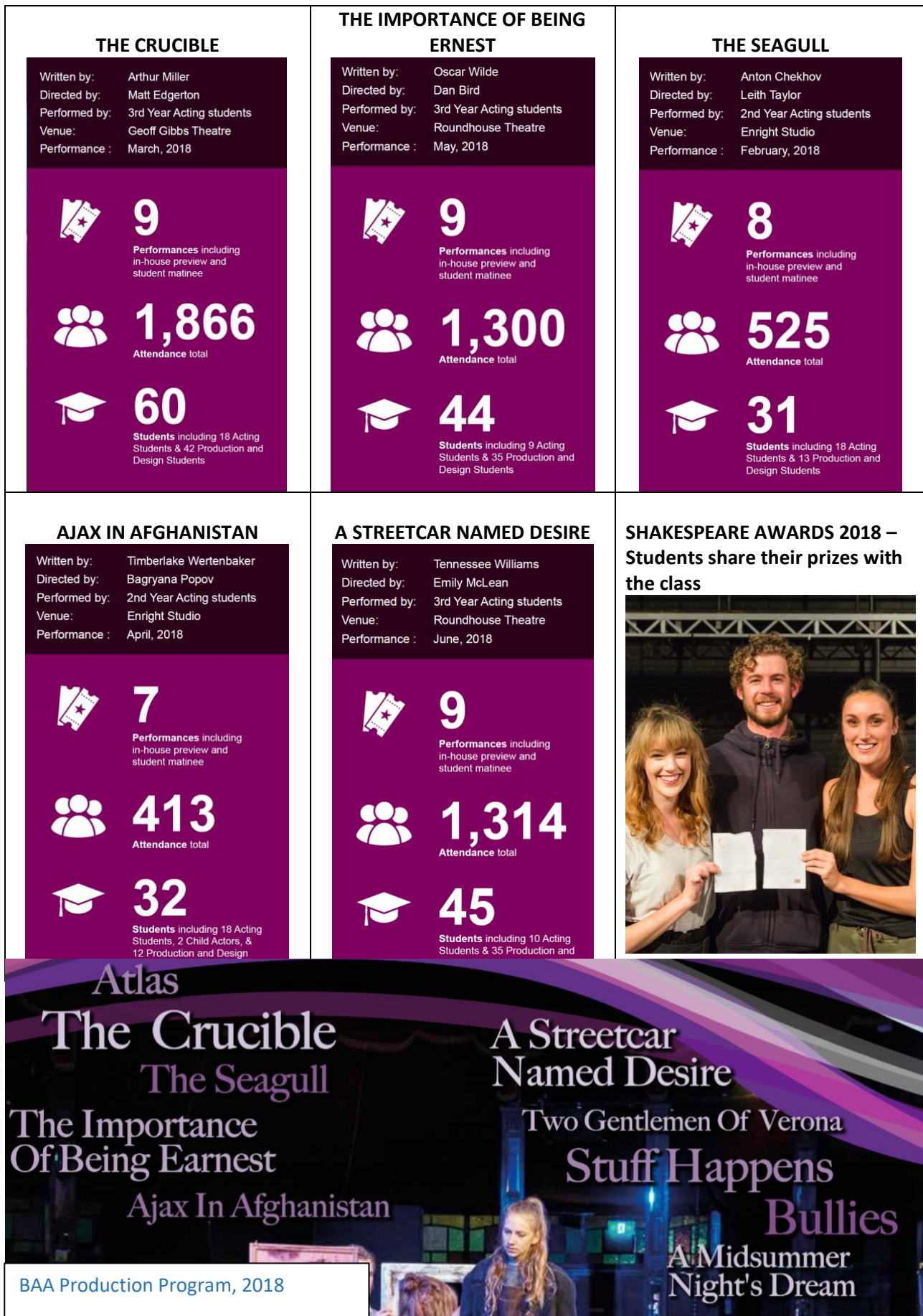
2017 Semester 1 BAA Production Statistics

<p>THE TEMPEST</p> <p> 958 TICKETS</p> <p> 36 STUDENTS  1 GUEST ARTIST</p> <p> 20 HOURS IN CLASS</p> <p> 8 HOURS IN MASTERCLASS</p>	<p>THE BLIND GIANT IS DANCING</p> <p> 554 TICKETS</p> <p> 36 STUDENTS  1 GUEST ARTIST</p> <p> 8 HOURS IN MASTERCLASS</p> <p> 72 HOURS IN PRODUCTION</p>	<p>THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK</p> <p> 1,054 TICKETS</p> <p> 27 STUDENTS  1 GUEST ARTIST</p> <p> 8 HOURS IN MASTERCLASS</p> <p> 35 HOURS IN PERFORMANCE</p>
<p>A DREAM PLAY</p> <p> 297 TICKETS</p> <p> 36 STUDENTS  1 GUEST ARTIST</p> <p> 20 HOURS IN CLASS</p> <p> 1 GUEST PANEILLIST AT THE BLUE ROOM</p>	<p>PRESENT LAUGHTER</p> <p> 962 TICKETS</p> <p> 36 STUDENTS  1 GUEST ARTIST</p> <p> 8 HOURS IN MASTERCLASS</p> <p> 72 HOURS IN PRODUCTION</p>	<p>PETITS FOURS</p> <p> 357 TICKETS</p> <p> 22 STUDENTS  4 GUEST ARTISTS</p> <p> 20 HOURS IN CLASS</p> <p> 30 HOURS IN PERFORMANCE</p>

Semester 2, 2017 BAA Production Statistics

<p>MOMENTUM</p> <p>Venue - Enright Studio</p> <p> 8 Performances including in-house preview and student matinee</p> <p> 453 Attendance total</p> <p> 28 Students including 18 Acting Students & 10 Production and Design Students</p> <p> 4 Community Engagement opportunities</p>	<p>AS YOU LIKE IT</p> <p>Venue - Enright Studio</p> <p> 9 Performances including in-house preview and student matinee</p> <p> 626 Attendance total</p> <p> 38 Students including 18 Acting Students & 20 Production and Design Students</p>	<p>THE THREEPENNY OPERA</p> <p>Venue - Edith Spiegeltent</p> <p> 8 Performances including in-house preview and student matinee</p> <p> 998 Attendance total</p> <p> 40 Students including 18 Acting Students, 13 Production and Design Students & 9 musicians</p> <p> 1 Community Engagement opportunity</p>
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2018 Semester 1 BAA Production Statistics



Perth Theatre Reviews

Friday, 26 December 2014

Top Ten Theatre Productions in 2014 - Plays



If this year's musicals had a large number of comedies then the plays went the exact opposite direction mining a much darker vein – incest, revenge, torture, the horrors of war, school shootings, suicide, mental illness. It was a veritable line-up of misery but never anything less than compelling theatre if somewhat confronting.

The Blue Room had a very strong year as did the WAAPA third years. Dramafest was a success and community theatre continues to throw up excellent performances and a diverse range of shows. I was also impressed with the work coming out of Curtin and Murdoch Universities that were both very active in 2014.

To the Top Ten:

1. Great Expectations (WAAPA)

While the Dickens classic certainly has its dark moments this was such an entertaining production with the use of the revolving chorus a wonderful device. All you need to know about how well it was received was writ large in the grin on Andrew Lewis' face in the lobby afterwards.

"If West Side Story is the crowning achievement of the musical theatre class in the red corner then the acting cohort in the blue corner have replied in stunning fashion with this production. To extend the boxing analogy, I had a ringside seat, front row centre, at the Geoff Gibbs Theatre. And what a view it was – a brilliant adaptation of the great novel, inventively staged and directed, with superb performances across the board."

2. Festen (WAAPA)

A gut punch of a play that was a majestic horror story that made me squirm and was utterly riveting. Contains the line of the year – "Because that's all you were good for" – that had me gasping at the monstrosity of it all.

Home
Directory
News
Reviews
Community Theatre
Schools
History
On Stage
Auditions

Coriolanus



By William Shakespeare. Directed by Michael Jenn. Roundhouse Theatre, WAAPA, My Lawley, WA. 11-17 Mar, 2016

WAAPA's Third Year Students brought this less-often-performed Shakespearian tragedy to life with passion, creating a performance that was highly energised, fascinating and moving.

Set on an almost bare set, a beautiful veneer of marble is peeling away to reveal that not all is right in Rome. Chris Brain's set marked the tone for the play as the actors burst onto the stage.

Title character Caius Martius, later Coriolanus, is given great depth by Angus McLaran, who plays this role with

determination in a thoughtfully portrayed downfall.

Kieran-Clancy Lowe, Giuseppe Rotondella and Will McNeil bring authority with personality to their roles as Roman leaders.

Junius Brutus and Sicinius Velutus are played by Kate Betcher and Lukas Radovich with youthful idealism, with performances that trace their characters' self realisation.

The Volscian General against Rome is powerfully played by Alexander Daly, nicely attended by Lachlan Ruffy.

Coriolanus' household is populated by some powerful women, Anneliese Apps was stunning as Coriolanus' mother Volturnia, Emma O'Sullivan was delightful as enthusiastic family friend Valeria, and Sarah Greenwood played wife Virgilia with quiet determination.

Darcy Stokes is not (yet) a WAAPA student, but this Primary School Student played Young Martius with understanding and lovely feeling. He shared the role with Oliver Haluszkiewicz.



The smaller roles, senators, soldiers, messengers, citizens, servants and the like, were all played with complete dedication and ease of delivery, in a production that moved swiftly and clearly. Fight scenes were particularly effective, wonderfully choreographed by Andy Fraser and executed with ferocity.

Almost completely underscored with music performed live by WAAPA percussionists Amelia Jutilane-Maynard and Arund Pearce, adding to a sense of urgency and highlighting shifts of power as part of an excellent sound design by Chris Mulchinock.

WAAPA's productions not only develop the talents of actors but extend and showcase students of lighting, sound, stage management and set construction.

Standouts in *Coriolanus* included the highly detailed costumes designed by Tyler Hill, and the lighting designed by Alex Woodmansey, which was key to the emotional journey. Front of House was expertly managed under the leadership of students Angela George and Isaac Bavecovic.

with integrity, energy and great understanding, which made it a pleasure to experience.

Inspired take on famous diary tale

THEATRE

The Diary of Anne Frank
WAAPA 3rd-year acting students
Roundhouse Theatre, WAAPA
REVIEW WILLIAM YEOMAN



We know Anne Frank died in a concentration camp in early 1945 at the age of just 15. That's what makes her diary, written between 1942 and 1944 while she and her family were hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam, so heart-breaking to read.

That's also what makes Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's 1955 Pulitzer Prize-winning play based on Anne's diary so heart-breaking to watch.

Every expression of hope, joy, love and nascent adolescence is, given its ultimate futility, devastating to witness.

But the diary and the play are inspirational, transformative experiences too, and I doubt anybody leaving after this powerfully moving Saturday matinee performance by third-year WAAPA acting students wasn't asking, "How can I be a better person? How can I do more with my life?" Or wasn't reaching for the tissues.

Even cast members taking their bows had to wipe away tears. That might give you some idea of just how successful is this production, so skilfully and empathetically directed by visiting director Peggy Shannon and designed by Ellise Stratton.

The young cast were uniformly impressive, fully inhabiting their roles as teenagers Anne (Skye Beker), Margot (Audrey Blyde) and Peter (Joshua Orpin) and adults Mr and Mrs Frank (Roy Joseph and Stephanie Somerville), Mr and Mrs Van Daan (Jack Scott and Katherine Pearson) and Mr Dussel (Jake Fryer-Hornsby).

Also excellent were fellow students Elliott Giarola and Lucinda Howes as Mr Kraler and Miep, the two non-Jews helping their Jewish friends as the latter hide upstairs in Mr Frank's company offices.

The choice of music, too, was exceptional, with chamber works by Chopin, Chausson, Faure and other romantic classical composers used to singular effect.

It's been 70 years since *The Diary of a Young Girl* was published. But this superb production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which so impressively evokes a society in microcosm as these ordinary people try to live ordinary lives in circumstances that are anything but ordinary, also comes at a time when the right is again ascendant.

The play is on until Thursday. Do see it.

Students cast spell in Miller's masterpiece

THEATRE

The Crucible
Geoff Gibbs Theatre, WAAPA
REVIEW DAVID ZAMPATTI



We've been fortunate to have had fine recent revivals of Arthur Miller's greatest plays in Perth, with *Black Swan's* *Death of A Salesman* and WAAPA's *All My Sons* and *A View from the Bridge*.

Now WAAPA's third-year acting students and guest director Matt Edgerton have mounted a full-throated, splendidly realised production of Miller's other masterpiece, 1952's *The Crucible*.

The story is familiar. In the 1690s, the little, God-fearing village of Salem, Massachusetts, tore itself to bits with accusations of witchcraft that saw 25 of its inhabitants executed or dying in prison.

Miller saw these lurid events as evidence of mass hysteria — very often created, sustained and swollen for cynical political or venal reasons. He connected them explicitly with the McCarthyist spasm of Cold War America (although Edgerton and the dramaturge Chris Isaacs chose to cut those direct references from this text) and we don't have to look hard or far for its present-day relevance.

The Crucible has a multiplicity of strongly drawn roles in support of the main characters, the hot-tempered, defiant farmer John Proctor (Mike Cameron) and his

gentle wife Elizabeth (Ellen Robson), the amoral principal accuser Abigail Williams (Lily Stewart), the conflicted priest John Hale (Will Bartolo), the ambitious, unyielding magistrate Thomas Danforth (Jarryd Dobson) and the overwhelmed servant girl Mary Warren (Mikayla Merks), whose distraught moral collapse destroys the Proctors.

The entire cast is outstanding and the inevitable incongruities of age between student actors and mature characters are hardly noticeable here.

Edgerton has wrangled some knockout ensemble effects in the climax of the play, the "yellow bird" paroxysms in the courtroom. His directors — Georgia Manning, whose set of parquet flooring and bare birch trees frames the action perfectly, Maeli Chel (costumes) Bradley Hoskins (lighting), composer Pavan Hari and sound designer Michael Tinsley — do work that belies their age and lack of experience.

It's great to see WAAPA's public programme drawing more and more public support, and the reasons aren't hard to find.

Serious, large-cast plays such as *The Crucible* (this production has a cast of 18) are all but impossible for professional companies to mount, but for WAAPA, and for the theatregoers of Perth, they are a godsend.

The Crucible runs until Thursday.

Perth Theatre Reviews

Saturday, 18 March 2017

The Blind Giant is Dancing - WAAPA (18 March 2017)



Hail and well met second year acting students! I look forward to getting to know your work individually and as a collective over the next two years.

Your inaugural public performance in the newly refurbished Roundhouse Theatre accompanied by a welcoming 80's Greatest Hits soundtrack (it's been a while since I've heard a song by Kajagoogoo... actually, did they record more than one?) was certainly ambitious. A tale of the disintegration of a man, dressed up as a political drama; the disintegration of a marriage; and the disintegration of a family.

That all three strands swirled around the one character meant that Adam Marks who played Allen Fitzgerald had an enormous workload and acquitted himself well.

Here's the thing though. I simply didn't like Stephen Sewell's writing. Characters felt more like positions than organic people; the political shenanigans were confusing with a late plot twist that was implausible; the dialogue was overly florid and didactic; and the interpersonal relationships verged into melodrama and didn't feel credible.

The play, at over two and a half hours, was also very long with those three strands only briefly intersecting to add any sort of dramatic heft. There were a lot of philosophical musings about love, religion, truth and freedom all coloured through a political lens that was hardly subtle.

Having said that, alongside Marks, I liked the work of Lily Stewart who played Fitzgerald's wife and was saddled with a lot of the clumsiest dialogue. The role demanded a range of emotions and while early scenes were a little awkward she handled herself with increasing confidence.

Others to impress were Michael Cameron as the main political antagonist; Jimi Rankin's initial scene played with scene chewing relish; Luke Smith's Ramon, Chilean accent and all, though having the most socialist character be a Chilean exile was symptomatic of the overt nature of the piece; and Jarryd Dobson came into his own in the second half as the younger Fitzgerald brother. Thomas Jackson and Jessie Lancaster had their moments as the Fitzgerald parents.

The set was cleverly constructed with several compartments and sliding panels and it was a stylishly costumed show, the men's suits in particular.

It was an interesting introduction to this class who showed plenty of promise but ultimately the play didn't resonate for me.

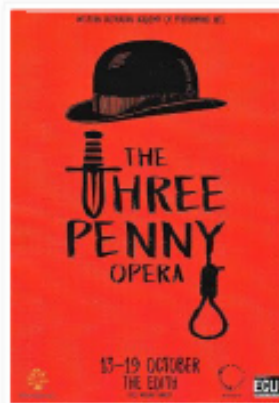
**originally published at facebook.com/perththeatreviews*



Perth Theatre Reviews

Sunday, 15 October 2017

The Threepenny Opera - WAAPA (14 October 2017)



Attitude. The very best productions have it. Clearly discernible, unapologetic, and totally embraced by all involved. The third year acting students bring it in spades with what turns out to be a perfect ending to their formal training at WAAPA. There is a cockiness and surety here that is undeniable.

Initially I had thought the prototypical musical was an odd choice for the acting cohort given the vocal demands but it turns out to be an inspired one. It suits the group personality of this graduating class like a 'fancy glove'. As one audience member put it after the show, "they owned the space".

And what a glorious space it is.

This is why you make the Edith Spiegeltent a permanent addition to the performance venues on the ECU Mount Lawley campus. For productions exactly like this. The atmosphere and sense of history adds immeasurably to the aura of a classic piece of theatre. So much so that visiting director Craig Flott dispenses with the need for set decoration with the exception of, as Roy Joseph's messenger amusingly put it, "these fucking mannequins". The two of which were totally extraneous to proceedings anyway.

Instead, the 8 piece band, conducted by visiting graduate Kohan van Sambeek, is nestled at the rear of the tent with a thrust-like stage jutting into the centre of the space. In a smart move, the audience is situated within the inner circle of the spiegelent so there are no cluttered sight lines. We're right on top of the action. Or, as I discovered, the action is occasionally right on top of us!

The outer circle and booths were the province of our players. This gives the production an immersive quality for the audience as characters prowl and cavort around us with multiple entry and egress points to and from the stage. There is the feeling of a fully formed world that exists beyond the strictures of the performance space. A colourful, bawdy, exotic world full of villains and dames; vagabonds and, well, to put it indelicately, ladies of dubious reputation. But something more as well - as if we're transported in time to how The Threepenny Opera might have been experienced in decades gone by.

In a simple device the setting of scenes was left to characters wielding cardboard signs (and to our imaginations). I must say the furniture was ever so fancy in the stables of my mind's eye! But more than that, a sense of time and place was evoked by make-up and costuming. The use of white face paint for all; the women provocatively attired; the men all singlets with smart pants and braces; not to mention a range of beggar chic that would make Oliver Twist blush.

Most impressive of all the performers were, as another audience member put it, "balls to the wall" in their characterisations. This was a chance to 'go big' and they lapped it up. In another smart move actors were mingling with the audience before the show started; being cheeky, friendly, inviting. It set the tone - that attitude - of the production right from the get go. A relaxed confidence that you couldn't help but feel and respond to. Thank you Laura McDonald, Sasha Simon, and Katherine Pearson for the chats.



To Whom it May Concern

**BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY** 

I am writing to offer my reflections on WAAPA's Acting Department, its very fine teaching and outstanding graduates. In late 2016, I moved to Perth to commence in the role of Artistic Director at Black Swan so in the last couple of years I have had the pleasure of getting to know the staff and students well.

Prior to moving to Perth, in my years of professional theatre directing I have been lucky to have worked with a large number of WAAPA graduates. I have always been impressed with the actors who trained at WAAPA. They are all talented but more than that, they have great dramaturgical nous, an unwavering diligence and professionalism and terrific versatility. They traverse form and performance styles with dexterity: contemporary, classics and devised. I have also been impressed by their skills in resilience. I remember once commenting on this to Katherine Tonkin, a WAAPA alumna of the Acting course, she told me something that has always stuck with me. Her classmates from WAAPA – and this was almost a decade later – continue to be a consistent and reliable part of her support network. Her year level caught up regularly, they remained close friends. The network that is nurtured for actors during their training years at WAAPA and Katherine isn't alone – this is the same story that I've since heard when I've talked to WAAPA graduates – remains important throughout their professional careers. I think that this aspect of their training contributes to the resilience of these talented artists.

Now that I live and work in WA I have even more exposure to WAAPA's current students, their training programs and graduates. I've enjoyed performances presented by all year levels. I've enjoyed their showcase presentations at the end of each year. I've also had the great pleasure of directing some of the brand-new graduates – in 2016, I directed Sophia Forrest and Rory O'Keefe in *Let the Right One In*. The breadth and rigour of the training means that graduating students are immediately highly valued employees with us at Black Swan. This is testament to the highly skilled and dedicated teaching staff – Andrew Lewis, Glenda Linscott et al. We are dedicated to employing first year and recent graduates. We value the close collaborative nature of the relationship that WAAPA and Black Swan share and we look forward to finding ways of extending this relationship into the future.

With thanks,



Clare Watson
Artistic Director
clare@bsstc.com.au



Email received from

Professor Hugh Hodgart
Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Directed 3rd Year production of *Tale of Two Cities*, 2016

Reflections on WAAPA 11/8/16

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at WAAPA directing *A Tale of Two Cities* and have been made most welcome by students and staff alike.

The third year actors have been a real pleasure to work with. They are thoughtful, skilful, collaborative, hard-working, adventurous and, most importantly, full of fun!

Every member of staff in Acting and in Production has been warm, supportive and thoroughly professional.

I have particularly enjoyed collaborating on our production with the wonderful Head of Movement Sam Chester. Her energy, enthusiasm and imagination have been an inspiration. And of course I am most grateful to Andrew Lewis for inviting me and for nurturing our exchange relationship with such determination and to Glenda Linscott for her warmth and hospitality as well as her leadership of a top notch acting programme.

An additional and unexpected pleasure has been the opportunity to work on the production with Joe Windley, Head of Voice at RADA. It's a real testament to the international ambitions of WAAPA, and the support it receives from the university and, crucially, from the Minderoo Foundation, that Joe and I should have travelled across the world to meet for the first time and to forge a firm personal and professional friendship which should reap future dividends for our two institutions back in our not-quite-so United Kingdom.

I'm sure these dividends will also benefit our friends here in Perth as we all seek to strengthen the links between us. The links between WAAPA and RCS, Glasgow and Perth, are strong and can only get stronger.

As I near the end of my five weeks in one city and begin to look forward to my return to the other, I am excited and optimistic about the possibilities for future exchanges and collaborations between our institutions. I am confident that my visit is but the prologue to many future chapters in this particular tale of our two cities.

All the best
Hugh



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SHANAHAN

1/08/2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Shanahan Management is a theatrical agency which has been in continuous operation for approximately 30 years and represents actors, writers, directors and creatives both in Australia and internationally.

Shanahan Management is proud to have amongst our clients several graduates from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Some of these are based in Australia and some based overseas.

Amongst those in the industry, WAAPA has built a reputation as one of the preeminent acting courses in the country.

Without doubt acting graduates from WAAPA are amongst the very best of acting graduates each year. This is not only because of the excellence of their craft, which is undoubted. But it is also that, of all the drama schools, year after year, WAAPA graduates are the most ready to enter the acting workforce. Not only amongst our colleague theatrical agents but casting directors, directors, producers and Network executives, the graduates of WAAPA are the always the subject great anticipation.

Consistency, in my view, is never a question of good luck but rather good planning. And so it is with WAAPA. Credit must surely be due to those who have been responsible for leading WAAPA to where it is today.

As a theatrical agency and indeed as part of the broader entertainment industry in this country we owe them a great deal.



Simon Whipp

**RGM**

1 August 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the Head of Acting at RGM Artists, one of Australia's leading theatrical agencies. It is with pleasure that I write to fully endorse the WAAPA Acting course.

RGM Artists represents some of the leading artists in their field who are recognised and celebrated both nationally and internationally including actors, writers, directors, producers, cinematographers, radio hosts, television presenters, influencers and corporate presenters.

We have been very happy to add a number of talented WAAPA graduates to our actor base over the last few years. My team and I are always impressed with the calibre of students who graduate from WAAPA, which we know to be an institution highly regarded both nationally and internationally. The training they provide is first class and the graduating actors are known to be highly skilled and well prepared for the industry.

As a Sydney based agency, we regularly make the trip to Perth to see the students work and gauge their progress and this allows us to see their productions which are first rate. In particular, the screen training component has greatly improved in recent years, both with the standard of the Graduate Showreels and the excellent opportunity the students have to work on the WA Film Academy films. These opportunities are provided under the guidance of Andrew Lewis, who maintains regular contact with us and introduces the students to the industry. Andrew has also attracted wonderful staff to the program including Glenda Linscott (Acting), Sam Chester (Movement) and Donald Woodburn and Luzita Fereday (Voice).

I have no hesitation in endorsing the WAAPA Acting Course and its leadership team for the successful program they run and the calibre of students we continue to see graduate.

Yours sincerely,


Erin O'Connor
Head of Acting